new masses

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THE $11,000,000 QUESTION

The FBI Wants Two Million Answers

by Virginia Gardner

EXISTENTIALISM:

Doctrine of Despair

by Y. Frid

NEW LIFE IN OLD PRAGUE

by David Zaslavsky

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just a minute

SOMETIMES we get mail from the Extreme Right. Mostly unsigned, these letters usually start off with: "You Jew Communist kikes. . . ." That's as far as we get before we file them in the wastebasket and get on to pleasanter duties. But we recently received one of these messages which was a little more interesting. First it was the envelope that made us pause: our name, carefully printed, was followed by (?). Inside, instead of a letter, was a couple of pages from the July 29 issue of NM, with pencilled notes on the margins. No signature, of course. The pages were those of a piece we'd written on what comes out when you turn on the radio —and leave it on all day.

The first notation explained the cryptic (?) on the envelope. Our by-line was encircled and the question asked: "Is that your *real* name?" The best indication of the thinking of our nameless correspondent was the note opposite the paragraph in which we had chided radio's real-life dramas for excluding such real-life problems as high prices, rent increases, housing shortages, etc. The comment was: "The stupid American masses would turn the radio off." We won't argue that point. We're like the city dog who said, after meeting up with a country skunk, "Now ain't that a hell of an attitude."

There was some more about "You Commies," etc. And some reflections on our capacity as a writer and on NM for publishing our stuff. The proof for this judgment was found in the text of our article. There in black and white was the evidence: we'd used "like" when we should have used "as." I can just see sweet old Sister Rose Cecelia blushing at that one. She had tried so hard to make us see that the rules of English Grammar and Good Usage were not to be taken lightly. But a teacher can just do so much and we'll probably make that slip again—just like we always do.

That business about our name reminds us that the old-time parlor game of "What's My Name?" is being developed into a sinister sport by those who would push America, as Gerhart Eisler has said, into the century of the investigated man. But maybe we are a Man of Mystery, too. We can see ourself running to catch the "A" train every morning, our long black velvet cloak streaming out behind.

Come to think of it, we have gone by many names, at that. There was the time when we launched a well-provisioned and well-armed raft onto Minnehaha Creek and called ourself Captain Kidd. And there were those long Saturday afternoons when we played in the head-high milkweeds on the corner lot and would have shot you dead with either or both of our two guns if you'd say we weren't really William S. Hart—if we didn't draw a bead on you even before you asked. In school we were called "Shorty"—and sometimes other names that called for a fight. Then for over three years our name was "Hey, you!"—though officially it was only a number: 33287993. To the kids in our Harlem neighborhood we're known only as "Linda's Father." And our wife never calls us anything but Hon'—if she's not mad about something, that is.

But X, our nameless correspondent, probably had something else in mind. No doubt he meant that our *real* name must be Brownsky or Brownitch or Brownberg. Some people worry about things like that and express their sentiments on subway walls, latrines and in anonymous letters. Some of them are Senators who, as Barrows Dunham points out in his excellent book, *Man Against Myth*, shake the Capitol dome with derisive laughter at the mention of a name like Dumbrowski. And some of them are converted ladies like Clare Boothe Luce whose tittering "Clear it with Sidney" brought joy to the hearts of the best people from Oyster Bay to Nob Hill.

We've got a good idea as to where society should send such people—even though the man who says his name is Napoleon would probably complain about the addition of such neighbors. And he'd have a legitimate beef, at that. L.L.B.

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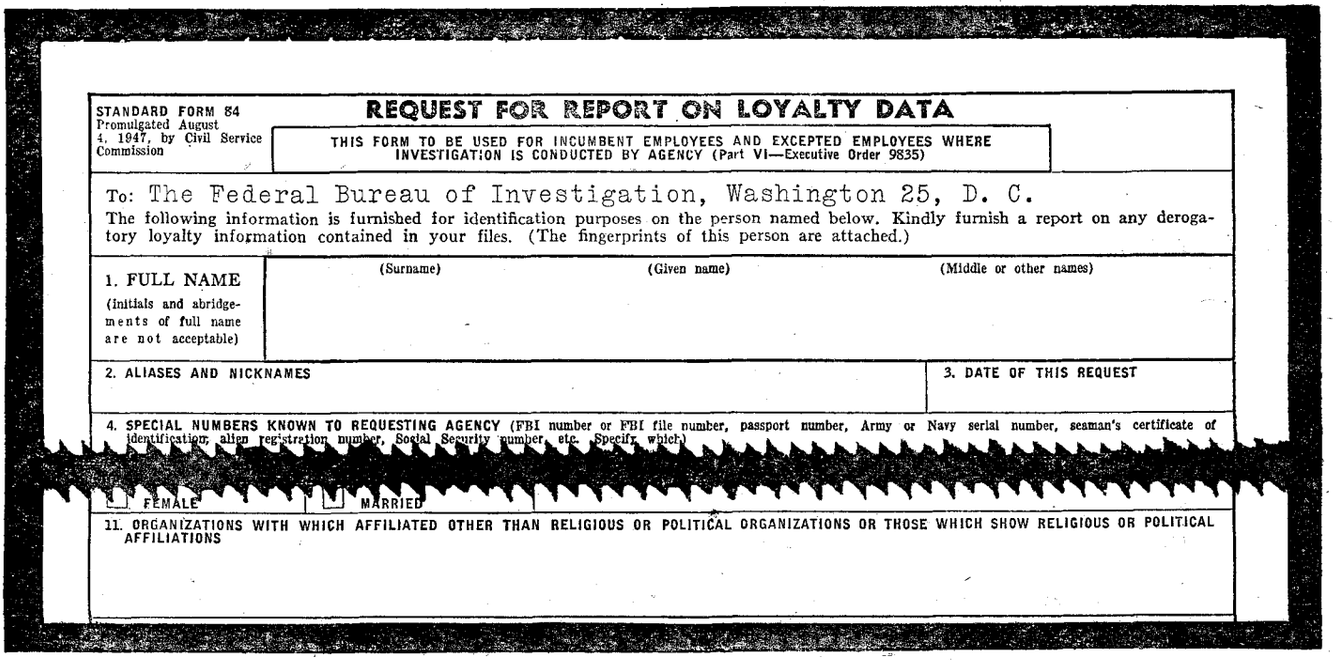

STANDARD FORM 84
Promulgated August 4, 1947, by Civil Service Commission

REQUEST FOR REPORT ON LOYALTY DATA

THIS FORM TO BE USED FOR INCUMBENT EMPLOYEES AND EXCEPTED EMPLOYEES WHERE INVESTIGATION IS CONDUCTED BY AGENCY (Part VI—Executive Order 9835)

To: The Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington 25, D. C.

The following information is furnished for identification purposes on the person named below. Kindly furnish a report on any derogatory loyalty information contained in your files. (The fingerprints of this person are attached.)

1. FULL NAME (initials and abridgements of full name are not acceptable) — (Surname) (Given name) (Middle or other names)

2. ALIASES AND NICKNAMES

3. DATE OF THIS REQUEST

4. SPECIAL NUMBERS KNOWN TO REQUESTING AGENCY (FBI number or FBI file number, passport number, Army or Navy serial number, seaman's certificate of identification, alien registration number, Social Security number, etc. Specify which.)

☐ FEMALE ☐ MARRIED

11. ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH AFFILIATED OTHER THAN RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS OR THOSE WHICH SHOW RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS

THE $11,000,000 QUESTION

The FBI and Civil Service Commission pass the buck on Question 11 in Truman's "loyalty" probe, but 2,000,000 worried employes must answer.

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

Washington.

THE forms for the new so-called loyalty investigation among 2,000,000 government workers are out, and the forms for fingerprints to go with them. For the newspaper photographers some fingerprinting was done last week, and with fanfare it was announced the new drive was under way. Actually it is getting under way this week.

It was timed nicely. The Eisler verdict was returned on a Friday. Papers that had played the trial down during the five weeks it was in progress sent their Red experts to be in on the kill. The Washington *Times-Herald* expert, who had been out hunting atom spies since the Dennis trial, was there. Streamer headlines announced the guilty verdict.

On Monday the newspapers announced the federal workers loyalty hunt would get under way that day. This was even closer timing than the announcement of the President's executive order on "loyalty." It was on February 6 that Gerhart Eisler was refused a chance to make his statement before being sworn at an Un-American Committee hearing, and the kept press was filled with whooperdo stories about the "Soviet mastermind in the US." FBI Chief Hoover said there was a "very definite possibility" that Eisler "may be" involved in intelligence work, etc.—all of which was used only as window dressing. On February 27 there was introduced the Thomas bill to set up a Federal Loyalty Commission whose findings on employe loyalty would be "final and conclusive," not subject to review. On March 23 the President's own Executive Order 9835 was published, with the FBI ordered to make the investigations and the Attorney General to direct preparation of a list of subversive organizations.

The stage is all set. The terror has been established. It was whipped up by the Eisler trial, although not as planned. The defense scored too many points and the government's case was so filled with pettiness and perjury that it wasn't news until the verdict.

I went over to the Civil Service Commission to see the fingerprinting, but found that it was just started "because the papers wanted some pictures to go with their story." Warehouses were busy sending out forms according to requisitions received from the agencies. Two million forms here and elsewhere present a distribution problem. Of course the government for years has been fingerprinting its employes and sending the prints to the FBI; but it was decided a few might have been left out somewhere, and that rather than check all they had against current agency lists, it would be "simpler" to fingerprint two million over again.

The form, however, is new. Question 1 provides three spaces for the full name. That is not enough, though. Question 2 asks for "aliases and nicknames." The government claimed Eisler had made six false statements be-

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cause he omitted six names he had used. He was even accused of having used his own first name, Gerhart, as an alias. But Question 11 is the most fascinating. It reads: "Organizations with which affiliated other than religious or political organizations, or those which show religious or political affiliations."

Now if the Eisler case gets to the Supreme Court on appeal, as it probably will if a new trial is denied, one point that will be argued is that one of the questions the government claimed he answered falsely was unconstitutional. The question itself only asked for the names of organizations to which he had belonged or was affiliated, but the Department of Justice interpreted that to mean political parties. The government said he should have said he belonged to The Communist Party, and that he was affiliated to the Communist Party of the US. The defense said there wasn't any "The Communist Party," that he was a member of the old Communist Party of Germany but was not affiliated with the American party.

FOR a day I tried to get an interpretation of Question 11 and was shunted back and forth between the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Justice, all of which was exhilarating and edifying and even had its funny aspects since I am not a government worker. First there was a public relations man at the Civil Service Commission. He said the Commission always had followed the rule, since 1883, of picking employes on merit, disregarding political or religious affiliations.

"But I thought the idea of spending the eleven million dollars was to weed out the Communists from the government," I said. "It is so interpreted. The papers say so. Yet here is a question which says you must mention organizations except those that are political or religious or those that show political or religious affiliations. It looks like they want the question itself to be legal, even if the inquiry isn't."

He smiled wanly. After all, he didn't write the questionnaire, he said; he just worked for the Commission. "As you say, there is a Bill of Rights, and then there's the Civil Service law," he added rather miserably. "This requires a legal interpretation." He gave me the name of a Commission legal authority.

"It's the FBI's questionnaire, not the Commission's," said the lawyer. "The form is one made up by the FBI."

"But look," I said, "suppose I'm just some little government clerk, and I read this question. I belong, say, to the National Negro Congress, or the Washington Book Shop, or any other one of a dozen or so organizations which the Un-American Committee says are Communist-front organizations. Suppose I've read news stories which say the government prosecutors in these recent cases stemming from the Un-American Committee ask prospective jurors if they're members of these organizations, and say or imply they're Communist-front. Now I, the little government clerk, don't think that, say, the Book Shop is an organization which shows political affiliation, but I know the Department of Justice does think it is. Am I permitted then to exclude it from this list? Or am I terrified, having read about the Eisler case and how he omitted to say he was affiliated with the US Communist Party, though he wasn't affiliated? Or, remembering the Marzani case, am I fearful I'll be hauled up on fraud if I don't say more than I'm required to say here under this question?"

The man sighed. "I know," he said despairingly. "We've been getting many queries like this the last few days. Yes, from the personnel offices of the various agencies. We advise them to get in touch with the Department of Justice or the FBI—one is just a unit of the other."

"The publicity office says that an employe will go to the personnel office if he has any question," I pursued. "But what about the poor little guy or gal who's given a dollar to something like the Spanish Loyalist cause, or joined something to do with civil rights somewhere, and who is scared if he goes into the personnel office to ask a question he'll be considered a Red?"

"I know," the man sighed. "I can see how this raises just those questions. I have a lot of personal ideas about these questions, too." Yes, he said, certainly, there were Constitutional protections against the invasion of religious liberty and freedom of speech. "But just don't quote me on any of this. Not on a hot issue like this."

I CALLED the Department of Justice public relations and talked to Arthur Callahan. I stated my question. I said I presumed the organizations on the Department of Justice "un-American" list would be interpreted as showing political affiliations.

"We have no list compiled," he said.

"But isn't the Un-American Committee always quoting the Department of Justice, or at least FBI Chief Hoover, as authority for which organizations are Communist-front?"

"There never has been a list that I know of," he said. "It hasn't been determined whether the list will be made public when it is compiled." He didn't know if there was any secret list supplied the committee.

"Well, what is a government employe supposed to put down in answer to that question if he doesn't need to put down those organizations which he figures will be interpreted as having political significance?" I asked. "If you belong to Tau Alpha Phi, or the Elks Club of Oscaloosa, should you put that down?"

IRVING McCANN

The name's familiar. If you're an NM reader, you've met him before. The counsel of the House Education and Labor subcommittee, who enlivened a hearing by punching and knocking down Joseph Padway, chief AFL attorney, is the same McCann about whom Virginia Gardner published an interview in our February 25 issue. In those days he was nursing the Hartley anti-labor bill through the House and he was a much more subdued McCann. "The members are conducting the hearings," he told Miss Gardner. "And I'd be just as happy if there wasn't a line of publicity on McCann."

Perhaps McCann's modesty had something to do with his past. According to Miss Gardner, in 1943 it was he who wrote a report knifing rent control for a Congressional committee headed by another notorious anti-labor expert, Rep. Howard Smith of Virginia. During the same period McCann was a frequent speaker (for a fee) at meetings of the landlord lobby, the National Association of Real Estate Boards.

In order words, punching people — the kind that aren't big-shot landlords or industrialists — is nothing new for McCann.

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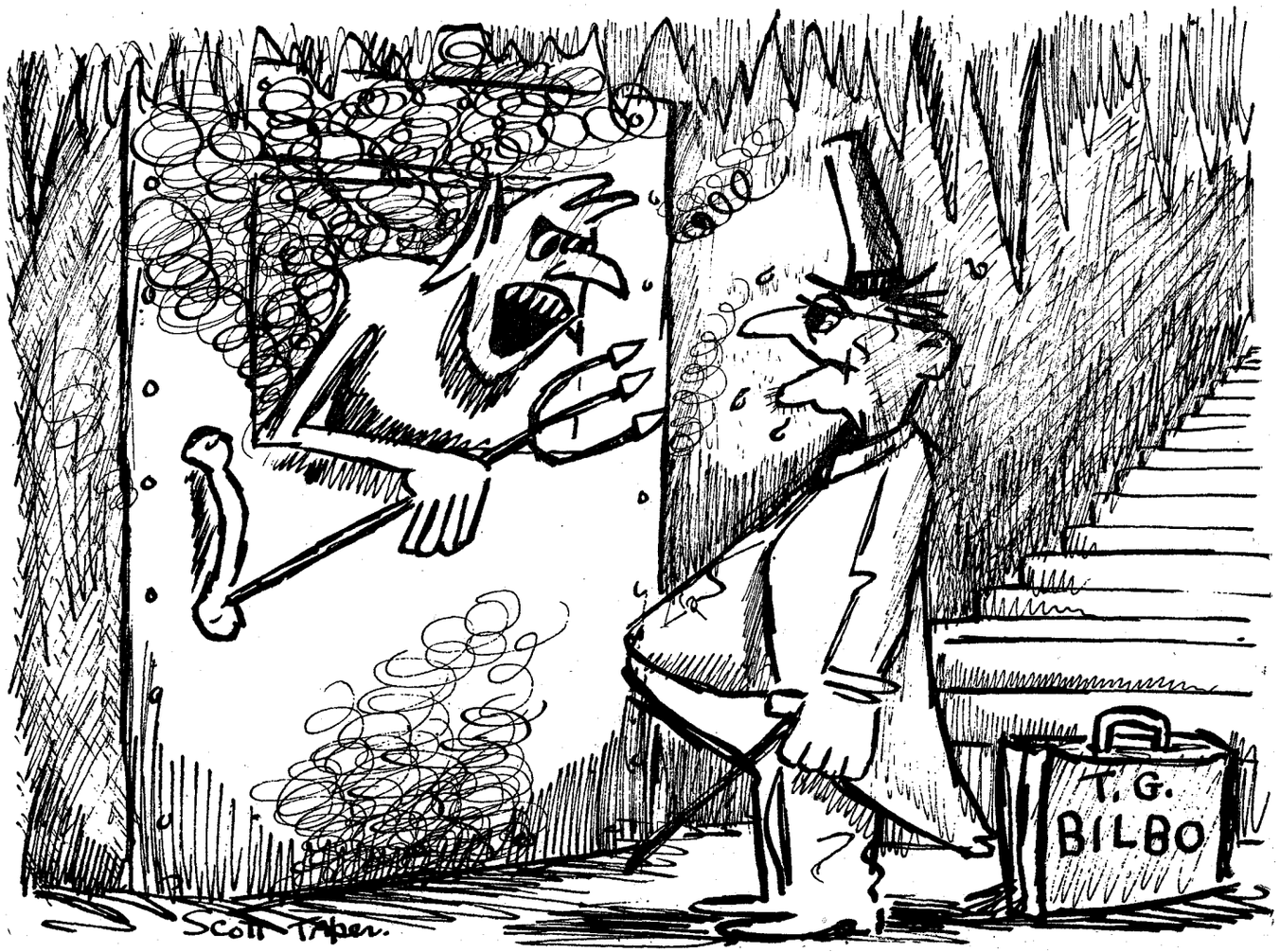

"Hell no!"

He would seek an interpretation, he said. I called him later; he reported he had not been able to get it. "We just can't give out legal opinions to anyone," he said.

"This is a new rule," I said, "and the Civil Service Commission already has had many queries on it, from various agencies. Now do you intend not to make public any interpretation of it?" That was the idea. He did insist, however, that it was not the FBI's questionnaire but the Commission's.

Then I went to another Civil Service Commission legal light. The language of Question 11, he said, was based on Rule No. 1 in the old Civil Service law, and while it might differ slightly in the new law effective last May 1, he thought the difference was not substantial. The old rule was, "No question in any form of application or in any examination shall be so framed so as to elicit information concerning the political or religious opinion or affiliation of any applicant, nor shall any inquiry made concerning such opinions or affiliations be so framed as to develop the individual's political and religious affiliations."

Almost everything I asked this legal expert, however, turned out to be "a deep subject."

The employe should just put down everything, he said, which was not political or religious. "Assume I'm a Catholic: I would not say I belong to the Catholic Church, but I would most certainly mention the sorority I belonged to; or, if I was a member of it, the Columbia Heights Citizens Association. But I would not put down the Democratic or Republican Parties."

"I suppose the Communist Party is a political party, is it not?"

"Oh, let's not get into that; that's a deep subject."

He said an employe should not be interested in "what may ensue, in the consequences," but should bend over backward to mention "any questionable organization."

"And what is 'questionable'?" I asked.

Oh, he said, he could not answer that. It had not been determined, like the meaning of "loyalty"—it hadn't been defined. That would be up to the President's commission, and later, the board of review appointed by the Civil Service Commissioners. How was the employe to know what was questionable? "It's not for him to worry about," he replied blandly. And in the next breath he said, yes, without doubt, the new form was modeled after the old rule of the Civil Service. "You would be surprised at the number of fascists we eliminated from government jobs, too," he volunteered. I replied that I would, and asked how many. He didn't have the figure on tap. (This thoroughly "loyal" government employe appeared terrified of being quoted.)

And anyway, as I reminded him, the Commission isn't going to do the investigating or make the decisions this time. The FBI gets seven and one-half million of the eleven million appropriated, and the Commission three and one-half million. The Commission is putting on some clerical help, several hundred here and in the field. The FBI is putting on 2,000 investigators; most of them have already been "processed"—that Washington word which so euphoniously describes what they do to prospective employes.

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The Sophistry of Sartre

The social function of Jean-Paul Sartre's writings is that of a peculiar "Trojan horse" left by reaction in the camp of the progressive forces.

By Y. FRID

THE works of Jean-Paul Sartre and the existentialist group of writers, of which he is leader, continue to attract attention in Europe and America. The opponents of the existentialists accuse them of having degraded literature to the level of mere commentary upon, and illustration of, philosophy; of having forsaken French intellectual clarity in favor of cloudy German and Scandinavian metaphysics, and of having taken as their chief master the German philosopher, M. Heidegger, who was rector of a university in Hitler Germany. The defenders of the existentialists say that, thanks to the efforts of these writers, the "metaphysical novel is being revived" and that literature has at last turned its attention from representation of surface phenomenon to a philosophical comprehension of the fundamental problems of existence. The work of the existentialists, and particular that of Sartre, really deserves attention, for it clearly illustrates the social role of contemporary individualism in the ideological attacks of reaction on the progressive ideas of our age.

Sartre's first book, *The Wall*, was published before the Second World War and prior to his philosophical works. Already in this book of short stories and in his first novel, *Nausea*, he looked at life through the eyes of an existentialist. To Sartre life was senseless, nauseous, lacking in color, a disgusting process of vegetation imposed upon people by some irrational and cruel fate. Not that this was any new "discovery" for Western literature of recent decades. And if Sartre's characters are direct descendants of some of the characters of Malraux, Gide and (to look further into the past) Strindberg, and if the construction of Sartre's most important novel is a development of the methods of Joyce, Dos Passos and Jules Romains, Sartre's philosophy has developed and synthesized into a system, cunningly reactionary and replete with contradictions, the moods and ideas already partly to be found in Gide and Malraux and now commonly found in a number of articles and books whose authors have probably never read Heidegger and the nineteenth-century Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard, Sartre's masters. For example, the philosophy of history expounded by the English scholar Ronald Latham, author of *In Search of Civilization*, published in 1916, is in many respects very similar to the philosophy of Sartre (although Latham is not an existentialist). The success Sartre has won in the West is explained by the fact that his is not a solitary voice, but one of the first voices in the discordant chorus of individualism at present singing the supposed "freedom of the individual" under capitalism.

The second cause of Sartre's reputation is that he writes as a member of the Resistance movement, and something in his work, something in his "philosophy," is able to excite the curiosity of young people whose tendencies are, perhaps, honest and humanist, but who are very undiscriminating both in philosophy and in evaluating present-day realities.

The ideological program of contemporary individualism is the assertion that man is imperfect. Hence, dominated by his instincts and impulses, torn by contradicting desires, inconstant and inconsistent, possessing no real individuality, modern man (excepting, of course, the "chosen few," the ideologists of individualism themselves) is the outcome of an unsuccessful experiment of nature. Man with a small initial letter, "man" in quotation marks, has turned out to be biologically "unacceptable" to Nature; he is one of Nature's mistakes. These "unsuccessful" creatures are, as it were, the bricks with which human society is built up, and therefore human society, also, must inevitably be far from perfection. Thus criticism of capitalism is replaced by criticism of the "nature" of mankind and it is therefore necessary to reconcile oneself to the evils of capitalism. The "bitter truth" about the fatal imperfection of human nature is carefully presented also by the historian Latham, the Trotskyist surrealist, Breton, the Nietzschean—and many others.

Dilettante.

This "truth" motivates a defeatist outlook with regard to man's future. It is an important premise of those who counsel flight from reality, retreat into mysticism and so forth. And it is precisely now, when it is fashionable to resort to flight of every kind, to turn, for instance, to religion and spiritualism (for example, one French primitivist artist, "the new A. Rousseau," says that when he is working his hand is guided by the spirit)—it is precisely now that Sartre would seem to draw some different conclusions from this "postulate" of the "imperfection" of man. Sartre declares that there is no God and there is no "other world"; only man is real, and there is nowhere for him to flee; he must live and act in his own epoch. Yes, says Sartre, man is imperfect. But, he emphasizes, man will continue to be imperfect and will only *exist*, carrying in himself nonbeing and not passing over to a state of *being*, unless he creates himself by his own deeds. No outside force will

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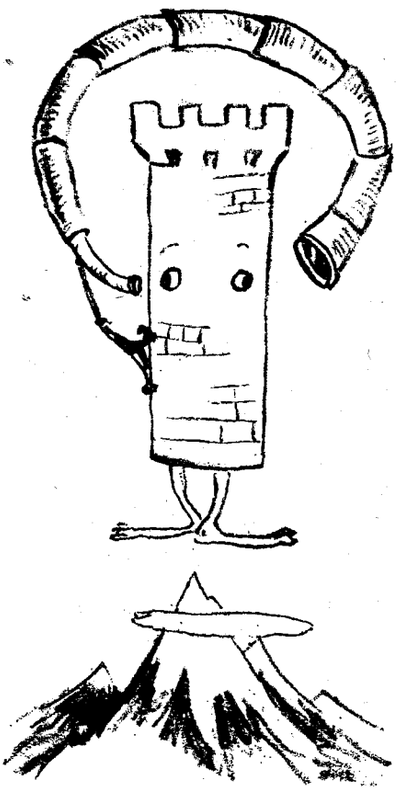
help him in this. "Man is only what he makes of himself." Each man is responsible for what mankind is.

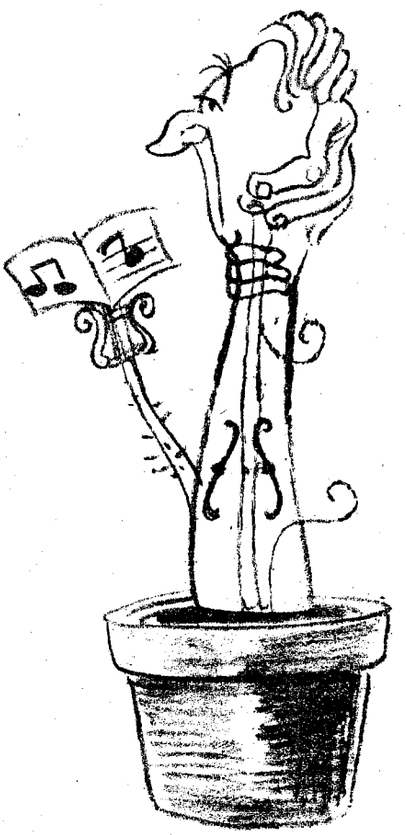
THIS may impress those who do not understand the deliberate complexity of Sartre, for these thoughts would appear to be those of a philosopher who is trying to comprehend the experience of the Resistance. But if Sartre does to some extent base his writing on the experience of the Resistance, he only succeeds in "muddying" and distorting the significance of this movement. We see a purely external resemblance, a mere mimicry. Indeed, when Sartre declares, "I think, therefore I am. That is the position I start from," this "Cartesianism" (conventionalized, however, in the manner of the empirio-critics) is also camouflage covering ideas taken from Heidegger and the obvious Nietzscheanism of Sartre himself.



Ivory Tower.

The foundation of Sartre's philosophical system is his definition of the basic, "eternal" conditions of human existence, conditions which do not depend on the will of man (in whom, according to Sartre, is expressed the absurd and non-logical cruelty of existence, of Fate). These general and permanent conditions, which are independent of each man, are as follows: a man's appearance on the earth and his necessity of living there, his participation in work, his existence among others and his being doomed to die. In Sartre's novel, *Reprieve*, the symbol of man's inevitable death is the threat of war. It is not the structure of society, the concrete expression of men's "participation in work" (factory-owner or unemployed) that is of interest to Sartre, but only these "universal" conditions of existence. They form the "bounds of existence" in which people who have no more mutual connection than matches in a box have their being. Man, according to Sartre, is cursed and "imprisoned in the bonds of an irrational Fate" (E. Meunier). But, says Sartre, if a man is able to realize that he is "abandoned" to the tyranny of Fate, that he is absolutely alone and can count only on his own individual powers, then in his solitude he will find an imaginary "freedom of the individual" and "greatness." "Man is free; man himself is freedom . . ." Dostoyevsky writes: "If there were no God, everything would be permitted"; this is existentialism's point of departure. Atheism was necessary to Sartre in order that he might draw this "definitive logical conclusion" from Dostoyevsky's idea: there is no God, therefore everything is permitted. It is true that not quite everything is "permitted"; there is a limit to "fantasy and caprice" (that is to say, evidently, that the solitary unemployed man cannot become a factory-owner, but can throw himself under a train and so give expression to his weariness, his despair and his protest against the absurdity of existence).

Now comes the main question: To what extent is the collective action of men possible and expedient—for example, in a party? The freedom of solitary man is freedom from all bonds with the world. It is conditioned by the fact that life in general is non-logical and "free" from mutual connections between phenomena. Determinism, causality, according to Sartre, is an abstraction that exists only in the minds of Marxists. Man is free to do with himself what he pleases. And since human beings, as Sartre sees them, are impulsive, inconstant creatures with a very short memory, astonishingly like Kipling's monkey-people, the *bander-logs*, in the *Jungle Book*, Sartre considers that a man can be responsible even for himself only today, only at the given moment. How, then, can others be trusted? What does a man know about others? Only that today he sees them as such and such, that today he agrees with some and argues with others. What will happen tomorrow is unknown to man.



Willy.

Art for Art's Sake.

To this insidious, cynical, poisonous skepticism is added relativism of the Machian type. "Only I, myself, can choose and say that such and such an action is good rather than bad." People are always "free to choose," every time afresh and, above all, they can choose ideas, abstract systems of phrases. Therefore it will be perfectly natural if the anti-fascists of today decide tomorrow to become fascists and compel those around them to accept the "change of boundary marks"; "at that moment fascism will become human truth"—a formula-of-the-day which will probably be liked by some of yesterday's anti-fascists. This conception of apostasy, as a manifestation of the "supreme freedom" and as a regular form of the "development" of a man, coincides with what

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the Russian pre-revolutionary decadent, Shestor, wrote about apostasy in his book, *Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche*. That is one of the reasons why the Sartre group regards Shestor as a "great philosopher." Sartre writes that each man, in making his choice, naturally chooses, out of respect for himself, to do good. And at the same time Sartre declares: "If anyone says to me, 'And what if I have chosen to do evil?' I will reply, 'There is no reason why you should act otherwise'" (for "everyone is free"). But the philosopher has the right morally to condemn a miscreant and to tell him that it is better to do good. It is well that philosophers of this type were not judges at Nuremberg. It is not surprising that Sartre writes: "We do not believe in progress"; in the last analysis, whatever a man may choose, he is "always the same" in all ages.

Translated by M. N. Roy. The concluding installment of this article will appear next week.

THE LION ROLLS OVER

By CLAUDE COCKBURN

London (by mail).

THE dominant event of "crisis week" was an evident slight shift in American tactics. You can interpret it as meaning that there had been a victory at Washington for those who all along have thought the thing to do was to push the Labor government either to a new election or to coalition. They had been opposed by those who considered it safer and easier to let the Labor government do the whole job of "adapting" British economy to Wall Street's need.

Very recently the Americans have been turning on the heat. It has been done particularly through the Washington correspondence of the *Daily Telegraph* and of the *Times*. There is good reason to think that the correspondents' dispatches were inspired either directly by Mr. Marshall himself or by one of his immediate underlings. They were, almost for the first time, openly and even savagely critical of the Labor government, and still more of each and every "socialistic" tendency in British domestic policy. The "heat" was, I gather, equally evident during the conversations which Sir Stafford Cripps had with Undersecretary of State Will Clayton in Paris.

The result of the new pressure has been, to date, just what the Americans expected. On the one hand, the Tories are mightily encouraged. Mr. Churchill's speech at Blenheim was a public call to the Americans not to undertake any long-term assistance for a "socialistic" Britain. It was a clear suggestion that if things can be pushed far and fast enough to the point of catastrophe, the Tories are ready and willing to act as the utterly reliable agents of American imperialism in Britain. In that sense it was a raising of the Tory electoral flag.

On the other hand the pressure was certainly not without its effects upon the leaders of the Labor Party. They, too, after brave words, began to explain and to demonstrate that they will in effect carry out the main lines of the design for British living demanded by Washington. Those lines are sufficiently obvious: the crisis must be "met" conservatively and not radically—meaning that the working class must carry the burdens. That applies to a very wide range of subjects from the question of steel nationalization and the capital levy to that of troop withdrawals—which must be "coordinated" with American military strategy and potentialities.

In return for such a policy the British government hopes it will get some "concessions" from the Americans—regarding convertibility of sterling, regarding dollar payments for the western zone in Germany. These are "concessions" which the government is prepared to purchase at an enormous social and political price. They are prepared, for instance, to pay heavy tribute to the Americans, if the Americans will agree to let Britain defend itself against the financial attacks of Argentina and Spain. These attacks are in fact only possible because Washington insists that these fascist countries should, in effect, have the right to draw dollars out of the US loan made (nominally) to Britain.

AFTER the meeting of the Parliamentary Labor Party there was a mood of temporary enthusiasm among very many Labor MP's. They had gained the impression that a firm front—in action and not only in words—against the demands of the Americans and of the Tories was indeed to be made. They had perhaps underestimated the extent to which the spirit of defeatism, the advocacy of capitulation, are widespread among their own colleagues.

Last week the London *New Statesman*—the organ, for the moment at least, of Mr. Richard Crossman, M.P., and the "Keep Left" people—had a leading article demanding, in very slightly camouflaged form, acceptance by Britain of the whole essence of the Marshall Plan as applied to the Ruhr. Mr. Crossman himself, I believe, in conversation with some of his Parliamentary colleagues, has gone even further. He apparently takes the view that even the camouflage may be hardly possible or even necessary.

And in general the leading group of the "Keep Left" people is now engaged in the old Social-Democratic custom of beheading the movement which they pretended to lead. They pretended they were against American domination of Europe. They pretended there was a way to maintain the independence of Europe (including Britain) against the US, without abandoning hostility to the USSR and the Communist parties of Europe. Now pretense Number Two has visibly blown up: and, being no doubt logical people, they are now abandoning pretense Number One. They are for capitulation to the dollar.

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The Big Black Willow

A Short Story by PHILLIP BONOSKY

It was a hot, sunny Southern afternoon, and iddle-Billie-boy lined himself up against the wall of the driveway as the huge pale-blue Greyhound buses rode in, their drivers riding high behind glass, and thick wheels rolling as big as iddle-Billie-boy was, and coming to a stop only a held-breath's distance away. Here, Billie knew, they only stopped for water and who-knows-what-the-man-did-inside and then were off again: kicking behind them a great gasp of infested smoke, winking once with their wise red light, and then off up—somewhere—North. Snow. Far away.

Across from the open driveway stood a moist green park with a statue and rider and name underneath, and sword; and instead of the other kind of hat, *their* kind of hat, that Billie knew was Confederate — Stonewall Jackson, Lee, too. And over them pigeons flew and dipped and twisted long admiring halos around and around; then perched on the peak of the hat and surveyed the park and looked down at iddle-Billie, at iddle-Billie-boy. The trees were huge, and the big willow swept a delicate green gesture across the face of the rider as the wind blew by. But it was huge, and its trunk was twisted black and hurtful.

When the bus rode in, Billie scanned its title to see where it was bound for, if it was New York, or Pittsburgh, or Cleveland; and none of them were capitals of states, only cities. This one he could see was either Pittsburgh or Cleveland because there was only one word, and a long one; and then when it stopped he could see that it was Pittsburgh. With an inevitable flutter of his heart, he watched the bus roll up to where he was standing and just as he couldn't hold his breath any longer, stop; and then—him sighing—the door opened and out came the driver.

"Boy," he said, looking at him, and directly at him—at Billie-boy, not at someone else—with his whole attention: "If you don't get the hell away from there, you're going to get one of these big goddam buses run you all over!" Proudly Billie-boy backed away and dropped his eyes shyly.

The people bumped out, one by one, and with their pained expressions ran to he-knew-where, but some stayed in the bus, elevated high above his head, kingly. He sidled along the side of the wall to beneath an open window where a red-faced boy about his helpless age sat half-hanging his head out and trying to see behind him. Billie-boy stared at him — saying "You-all goin' to Pittsburgh" under his breath softly—and tried to decipher the invisible signs that he bore on his body, in his eyes; if he was Northern-born that made him different from Billie, who only stayed here.

Billie could hear the flat, clipped voices of other definitely Northerners, tones and voices that made him want to come to attention and look with apprehension at the speakers for whatever command was being issued.

"This is Greensboro, hey-hey!" suddenly chanted the little boy, hanging out of the window, pulling Billie's eyes back to him, "Wink-blink and you're through it, gone away," he said sadly.

Billie's face hurt with the sudden plunge of blood, "Oh, yeah, dirty old Pittsburgh!" he cried. "I'd never want to go to dirty old Pittsburgh!"

The boy looked at him cooly. "Who you know so you can go to Pittsburgh? We don't allow *anybody* to come up there!"

"I don't have to know nobody," Billie said hotly. "I wouldn't *go!*"

"We'd paddle you black-and-blue," the boy in the bus said serenely, looking down on Billie-boy, "and then we'd throw you in the river."

"Oh, yeah!" cried Billie, clenching his hands behind him, "we'd *hang* you, we'd string you up, we'd lynch

"On that tree, right there, just like we lynched everybody there."

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you! We'd *kill* you!" he cried triumphantly.

"You and who else in this little old town?"

"Me, and me, and *everybody!*" shouted Billie. And then he turned and threw his arm at the big black willow tree and cried: "On that tree, right there, just like we lynched everybody there!"

The boy's eyes followed the arm to the big willow tree, and Billie could see a new, thoughtful look creep into his eyes, and pressing on, he cried louder: "There's our old lynching tree, in that old park. That's where we string up everybody we don't like!"

"I'll bet that's where you hang colored people?" the boy said respectfully, looking with a subdued expression. "Don't you?"

"Of course we do!" Billie cried. "Every day, any time we want to!"

At last the boy in the bus said nothing. He looked again at the tree and then down at Billie and then finally said softly: "Did you *see* one?"

Billie answered: "Lots of times! I even got a rope once!" he said.

"That *did* it?" the boy said.

"Of course!" Billie cried. "That's easy to get!"

The boy examined Billie and then said with sudden disdain: "I don't believe you—you're just a little snotpot."

Furiously, Billie shouted at him. "*You'd* be scared! You'd run home to your dirty old Mama! I seen one, I seen one—lots of times!" Then his eyes spread wide and the yellow curls on his head bobbed a little and he said in a heavy whisper: "Onct, one night —they went out and lynched old Granny Picketty!"

"A *lady*?" the boy cried.

"Of course!" Billie cried impatiently. "We don't care! We took her out and tied her up—"

"What did she *do*?"

"Oh, I don't know *now*," Billie cried. "I think — I think she took something, maybe — I don't *know*," he said. "It was right on that old tree," he cried, again pointing to it, and again savoring the sudden widening of the other boy's eyes. "Right on that branch that sticks out over there—that one, see? Almost touching the statue. We hanged her up there."

"Didn't she cry?" the boy asked.

"Of course she cried!" Billie-boy retorted. "She cried and she cried! She fell down on her knees and she said: 'O spah me, oh, Lawd, spah me —oh, spah me—' " He closed his eyes and clasped his hands prayer-like together and his voice throbbed. "That's the way she talks."

"You talk that way, too," the upper boy observed.

"I do not!" Billie said fiercely, stopping the passionate gallop of his story. "We *lynched* her," he cried defiantly, looking at him. "We don't like sassy niggers — nor old sassy Northerners either, like you maybe."

"You'd never lynch me!" the boy cried. "I'd kill you first, I'd stick a knife in your eye!"

Billie blinked. "I'd be too fast for you," he assured the boy.

The upper boy licked his lips. Finally, with a long look at the park, he said: "I'm glad I don't live down here. Sometime I'm going to come down here, though," he confided to Billie, "and when I see a dirty kid like you I'll just give you a kick in the behind."

The driver had got into the bus.

"And I'll get *you*," Billie cried, "when I'm grownup I'll string you up on that old tree in the old park. So you don't come down *here* again!" The bus began to roll, and the boy's head came farther out of the window.

"Good-by, Greensboro!" he cried. "I hate you all, and even your dirty old dogs and cats, and you, you, you!"

"Don't come back!" Billie screamed. "I'll hang you! I'll hang you!" The bus turned the corner and the taillight winked at him. "I'll poke you if you ever come back. . . ." he said softly, trailing his voice back to himself, feeling all alone in the deserted driveway, with the sharp smell of gasoline filling his nose.

HE LINGERED only a few moments more, then crossed to the park, where he threw a stone at the pigeons. He skipped past the tree, reaching up to touch one of the dipping green branches.

From the park he rolled an imaginary hoop down the sidewalks, then parked it at the gate of his home. He ran alongside the house to the back porch. Stealthily he crept up the steps, crept to the screen-door, opening it a little, poked an extended finger through and cried: "Bang! I shot you!" at the Negro woman standing with her back to the door.

She turned around and with tremendously gratifying surprise cried: "Why, iddle-old-Billie-boy, you caught me again! My, my, you sneak up so sly and quiet, old Granny Picketty's ears, they just don't pick you up anymore!"

"I'm pretty quiet," Billie admitted, getting up and going into the kitchen. He looked at the table where a big bowl flowed over with white cream, and he looked up at her: "I'll bet you

portside patter

By BILL RICHARDS

Princess Elizabeth is going to forego her trousseau because of shortages. Among the English these days only the army is dressed to kill.

•

Herbert Hoover has accepted appointment to a committee with the understanding that it is to be his last public service. Some historians are having a difficult time determining whether there was a first.

•

A rather grim dispatch tells us that funeral prices are rising. It seems there is also a high cost of leaving.

•

Secretary Marshall has told the American republics that Europe has precedence on American aid. Other nations will please note that the line forms to the Right.

Secretary of Agriculture Anderson is considered a good bet to become Democratic National Chairman. The Democrats are evidently aware that their '48 campaign is going to require a lot of fertilizer.

•

Dewey-for-President pins have already made their appearance. The public thus has a splendid opportunity to get stuck even before the election.

•

Bilbo's death has just about solved the debate over his Senate seat. As a result of this timely act there are many who think Bilbo has finally qualified.

•

There is talk of raising Army pay again to spur enlistments. Many potential recruits don't mind the lack of gold as much as the predominance of brass.

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you're going to use up all that old cream!"

She made a gesture of calculation, her finger to her chin, and said: "Your Mama has give me her orders, and your Daddy has give me *his*, and I don' know which one I should follow."

"My father," he said quickly.

"Well," she said, "and *he* say, 'only if he's *good*'; and has you been good today?"

"Oh, *Granny*!" Billie cried. "I didn't do anything today! I was just down to the old bus terminal to watch the old buses come in. And there was a sassy Northern boy that didn't have no manners at all! And I told him we's *people* down here; and we wouldn't *want* to go up to the dirty old Northern cities where you don't live right, and where everything is cold and dirty, and everything."

"Billie-boy, how many times I tol' you not to go down to that old bus terminal and get yourself run over by a great big bus?"

"But I'm careful," Billie replied. "I just watch."

She lifted a spoonful of cream and extended it to his open mouth.

"And what did the bad boy say?"

"He said he'd never come to live in Greensboro, and I said I'd never live in the North where it's cold."

She put the spoon down and pulled him toward her. He laid his head against her aromatic apron and closed his eyes deliciously for a moment. "Gee, Granny Picketty," he said enthusiastically, "you smell *good*!"

"That's just all that cookin', honey boy," she said. She ran her fingers through the curls on his head and smiled at him. "If you're good to Granny," she whispered, "and if you can wait, I got *something* for you."

His eyes flew wide and he whispered back. "Sweet?"

"Not sweet this time," she answered. "But something."

"Tell me, tell me, Granny!"

"You just wait," she said. "Now you just go out on the porch and play."

He ran his little finger around the outside rim of the bowl and put it into his mouth. At the screen-door he stopped and said to her, fervently, his eyes shining with love for her: "Granny! You make the best things of all!" And then outside, pressing his nose to the screen-door: "I'll bet that Northern boy don't *ever* taste all the good things you make!" And then he finished: "And *he* don't want to live in Greensboro, dummy, dummy!"

Valley of Decision

FOR Americans and for American business the most important single spot on earth today is the Ruhr Valley of Germany—a valley no bigger in area than the

if it is to help itself back to a self-supporting economy. And, after observing Europe for many weeks, I am convinced that no one but the United States can successfully supervise the rebuilding of the Ruhr.

WE SHOULD SUPERVISE IT. The British have been running the Ruhr's industry. They might conceivably suggest to Washington that they continue to run it while we pay the bill. *That we should never agree to.* There is a sound old rule that he who pays the piper shall call the tune.

B. The top supervising management jobs—both the top policy and the top technical jobs—require outstanding business ability. That is why American business men must be willing to go to Germany, sacrificing comfort and leisure, and even income, if necessary.

C. Germans should take over the management job at the operating level. The Germans are good technicians. Th

CAST your eye up and down these excerpts from a full-page ad in the New York *Herald Tribune*, August 19. Don't shudder, don't scream, don't wonder why the kid from down the block is buried overseas or why somebody's son has a steel gadget instead of a hand. That would be disrespectful of McGraw-Hill, the business magazine and textbook empire that paid for the ad—probably tax deductible. It's a smooth job of prose, as smooth as a coffin lid. We print parts of it free of charge as examples of the most brazen stuff we've seen in a long time. You ought to know how much perfumed sweat and money are being put into selling the idea that it's right smart for our Lords of Creation to grab the Ruhr. And it's going to be easy, they say, because the big boys are ready to sacrifice their skill, their comfort and leisure. (No more weekends at Newport or droll evenings at the 21 Club.) To make the grab even easier they'll get Germans to help operate the Ruhr industries. Nothing political, you understand. Just good old efficiency. And if you say that your neighbor's son did not lose his arm so that the big boys could wrap theirs around the Ruhr's steel plant and coal pits—why, don't be arrogant. We're paying the money so we call the tune. Only trouble is that most of the world won't dance. There is a heap of trouble in store for us if the piper and tune idea gets any farther than it has.

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ST. LOUIS BLUES

by Lloyd L. Brown

THE Ebbets Field hands, uniformed in bright blue overalls, were rolling up the huge nylon tarpaulin that protected the infield from the rain which had delayed the game for over half an hour. From the seats behind us came a running commentary which blended the patois of Williamsburg with the distinctive dialect of Bensonhurst.

FIRST CITIZEN: Them groundkeepers—think they've got a union? Bet they have. Hah!

SECOND CITIZEN: Sure they got one. Didn't they have a strike at Yankee Stadium? I know a guy that works there.

FIRST CIT.: Yeah?

SECOND CIT.: Yeah. He's a ticket-seller. Makes four dollars an hour. Pretty soft. Works only two hours a day and makes eight bucks.

FIRST CIT.: Yeah, but if he works even seven days a week he only gets fifty-six. That ain't so hot.

SECOND CIT.: Yeah, but he makes extra. People that forget their change.

FIRST CIT.: Hah! Not bad. My brother-in-law's brother did that once. Handed in a ten and forgot to collect the rest. But he's a jerk anyway. . . .

And from our seats in far left field—the best you can get for a big game at Brooklyn's ball park if you come only an hour before game time—we could hear people singing and humming with the organ music while waiting for the skies to dry. Natives and visitors from Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens and maybe even from Staten Island joined in incantation to the cloud-hidden god: "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. . . ." and "Wait till the sun shines Nellie. . . ."

When 25,000 people pray in Branch Rickey's temple their prayers are answered. Sometimes, anyway. Although the sky hung damp like an old gray mop, the rain stopped and the game began.

With Brooklyn ahead five and one-half games in the pennant race, it was the final game of a four-game series with the second-place St. Louis Cardinals. Exactly 125,731 had paid admission to the season's last home stand against the Western challengers—an attendance which, combined with the much larger audience listening to Red Barber's radio account, probably indicates a greater public concern about the menacing Cards than with Albania's threat to our national security.

And then, in addition to the excitement of a hot pennant battle, there is one John Roosevelt Robinson whose service in Dodger uniform brings in the customers in droves not only at Ebbets Field but in all the seven other parks around the circuit. A modest young rookie first-baseman, Jackie is a natural, a star. Good with the stick and afield, he's the league's leading base-runner and a big asset to his team. Across the land and in the smallest hamlet they know about Jackie—the first Negro to break across the barriers of Jim Crow baseball and reach the top in our national game.

Jackie's fans didn't have long to wait before they could cheer. In the Dodger's half of the third, after the invaders had been set down scoreless and hitless in their first three frames, Robinson smashed a double into left field which scored Stanky with the first run of the game.

What a game! For the first eight innings it was a breeze for the Brooks. Big Ralph Branca, the Dodger pitcher, had his stuff working like a charm and the boys from St. Louis could easily have been mistaken for a team from Independence, Mo., made up of nine men named Truman. Nobody around us mentioned it, but there were significant looks about and nods at the scoreboard. Something was happening, but one of those things you dare not talk about lest you put a whammy on the pitcher. But somewhere someone—maybe out in St. Louis or maybe it was an ignoble Giant fan—must have been talking about it. Because in the eighth inning a disturbing young man, Whitey Kurowski, banged out a single and all hope for a no-hitter for Branca was dead in the left-field grass.

Tough. But we'd settle for a one-hitter, a shut-out. And when the Dodgers racked up another run in the eighth it was in the bag—we thought. When the Cards came to bat in the ninth, the murmur in the stands was like the buzzing of a high-tension wire. Branca weakened, the magic was gone from his tired right arm, and he walked a couple of men. There were two out by then—one out to go for the game. Then Hugh Casey was brought in to relieve.

BUT Victory, who had sat in the Dodger dugout all afternoon, chewing and spitting in harmony with the Brooklyn reserves, climbed out and fluttered across the field to perch on the Red Birds' roost. One run came in on a single off Casey; the tying run moving over to third. And facing the pitcher was that Kurowski, waving his big bat.

Then it happened. Kurowski rolled an easy grounder to Jorgensen at third who booted it. An easy out, the game-winning out—he booted it. The tying run came in; the score was two all. The record books will call it simply, "Error by Jorgensen." That's all. But the moan which rose from 25,000 anguished hearts registered it as one of those crushing tragedies which come into the lives of all men. The man in front of us was slumped in his seat, slowly beating his head with a rolled-up copy of *PM*.

So the game went into extra innings. We'll get 'em yet, we boldly told our neighbors. We'll win this one yet, our neighbors bravely told us. But in our hearts we knew. And somehow it seemed inevitable that when Furillo doubled for Brooklyn in the tenth and Stanky raced for home with what would have been the winning run that he should be nipped at the plate by the throw-in from right field. And he was.

But what scriptwriter would be so bold as to have Kurowski—that same Kurowski—come to bat in the twelfth and win the game for the Cards with a mighty home-run? But he did. And who would figure that in Brooklyn's half of that inning Jackie Robinson—king of the base-paths—would be picked off second base for the second out? He was.

And after all that, when the triumphant Cards wrapped up the game and took it home — well, what was there to say? Oh yes, there'll be other games this year and maybe we'll win the championship. But this was our game —and we lost it. Had it in our hands, but it got away. Behind us as we crowded into the BMT, an elderly Negro woman told her friend, "Now we've got this long ride home —and with a heavy heart." Then she laughed.

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New Life in Old Prague

Czechoslovakia reverberates with high ventures and fresh hope. A report on the new democracy.

By DAVID ZASLAVSKY

COMING into Prague, through the steep and crooked streets of the Old Town, one's first thought is of the pleasure it would be to stroll here at leisure, stopping before the ancient buildings, examining facades wrought with the carvings of medieval masters, peering into time-worn churches. The very names of the streets breathe enchantment: the Street of the Alchemists; Mozart Street. There is the house where Kepler lived, and there the Jan Hus Square. Old Prague is a veritable museum of the Middle Ages, a splendid monument to ancient architecture.

But for four days and a night the delegates to the International Congress of Journalists sat in conference in the spacious Slav House, seeing almost nothing of the city. On our way to and from sessions, we grew familiar with the central thoroughfare, Vaclavske Namesti, and the streets adjoining it. This section is not ancient Prague; but it is a part of the old pre-war city. The big stores here show no external sign of change. There are numerous "passages," or covered streets lined with shops—one of the peculiarities of Prague's shopping district. Street advertising follows American lines. The names of the streets trace the tale of modern and less modern history. Washington Street, Hoover Street, the Wilson Railway Station—that is the period of the First World War. Stalin Avenue, Roosevelt Avenue—that is the period of the Second World War.

The industrial districts of Prague, unlike the central districts, bear signs of bombing. Nothing here of the museum city: endless fences enclose big industrial plants. A huge area is occupied by the shops of one of the country's biggest electrical equipment plants, formerly the property of the Kolben-Danek firm and now known as the Tito Works—a nationalized enterprise. Before the war this plant was controlled by the Zivnostenska Bank, which, though nominally Czechoslovakian, was in reality the property of foreign capitalists. During the war it became German property. The plant continued to operate through the war, sustaining no damage.

After the war the plant at first did not operate smoothly. Productivity had lagged under the Germans, and less than a third of the veteran workers were left. Today, however, labor productivity is ten percent above pre-war, planned output is exceeded and the plant is experiencing a shortage of manpower—a common phenomenon in Czechoslovakia.

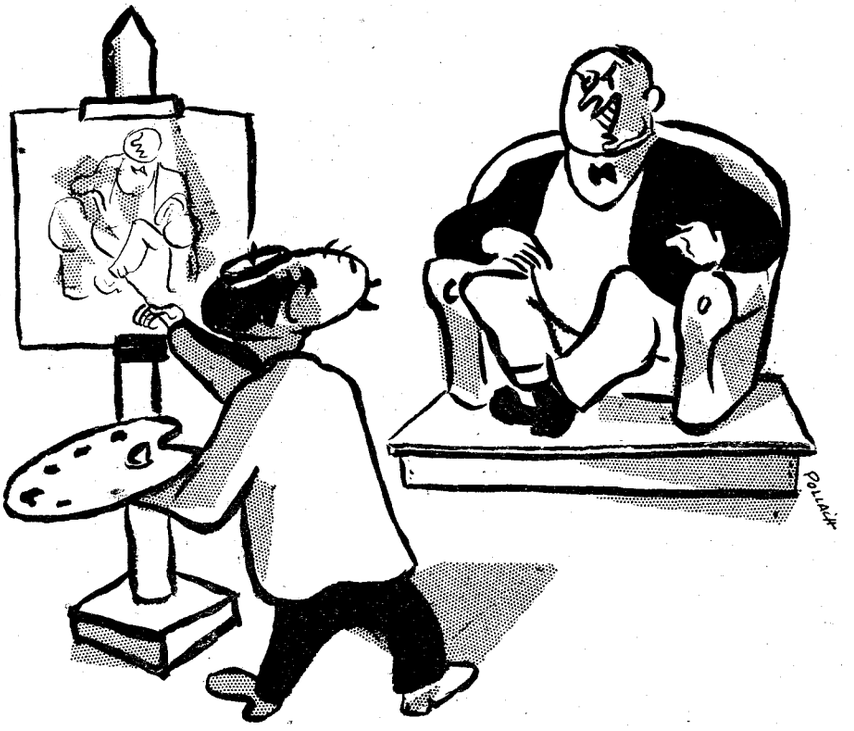
We inquired as to the management. The plant is headed by a manager with full executive authority. He is assisted by a plant council, elected by secret ballot at a general meeting of workers and office employes.

The administration has been purged of all employes who voluntarily collaborated with the Germans. Complete harmony prevails between the council and the manager; discipline among the workers is excellent, and the mood is one of buoyant confidence in the future. There are prospects for further expansion and improvement in the workers' standard of living. A co-operative building society has been formed to build homes for the workers: this will help to solve the problem of manpower. Young workers are being trained at the plant's own schools. Among these are a group of orphans from Yugoslavia. A rest home in the mountains has been turned over to the plant for the use of its workers.

AT KLADNO we were introduced to the same type of nationalized administration at the President Benes mine.

This is an old mine, sunk in 1889;

DILLY **By Sam Pollach**



"Wouldn't this portrait be worth lots more, Mr. Dilly, if you'd been dead for fifty years?"

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its owners were Germans. During the war it was taken over by the Goering concern and today, like all the mines in Czechoslovakia, it is nationalized. For purposes of management it has been merged with a group of other mines, formerly controlled by the Anglo-Czech Bank. Labor productivity, which fell some thirty to forty percent under the Germans, is now above the pre-war level.

Among the workers at the mine we noticed groups of men and women who did not look like the other miners. These, it turned out, were volunteer brigades come to help out at the mine in response to an appeal issued by the Communist Party. Such "volunteer labor days" are very popular in Czechoslovakia, and we were to encounter many volunteer brigades during our visit. Their members generally devote one day a week to voluntary labor; but there are many who give up a week of their yearly vacations.

On our way from Prague to Kladno we saw no visible signs of wartime destruction. Yet we passed the site of the village of Lidice, which the Germans wiped from the face of the earth in revenge for the assassination of the murderer Heydrich.

Evening was approaching as we reached the spot. A valley lay before us, between gently sloping hills: a perfectly ordinary valley, grass-grown and empty. It was simply inconceivable that this had once been a center of human life, with streets and houses and children. Just a smooth, unpitted grassy sward. We had always imagined Lidice as an ordinary village with a few modest houses, orchards and vegetable gardens, but we were wrong. We were shown a photograph of Lidice which depicted a small town, with two-story brick homes and three-story public buildings. There was a big school and a large church. And of all that, nothing—literally nothing—remains. The Germans did not stop at leveling every building with the earth. They destroyed even that which lay beneath the surface: the masonry of cellars and foundations. They left no sign of streets and squares—not a single ruin—nothing!

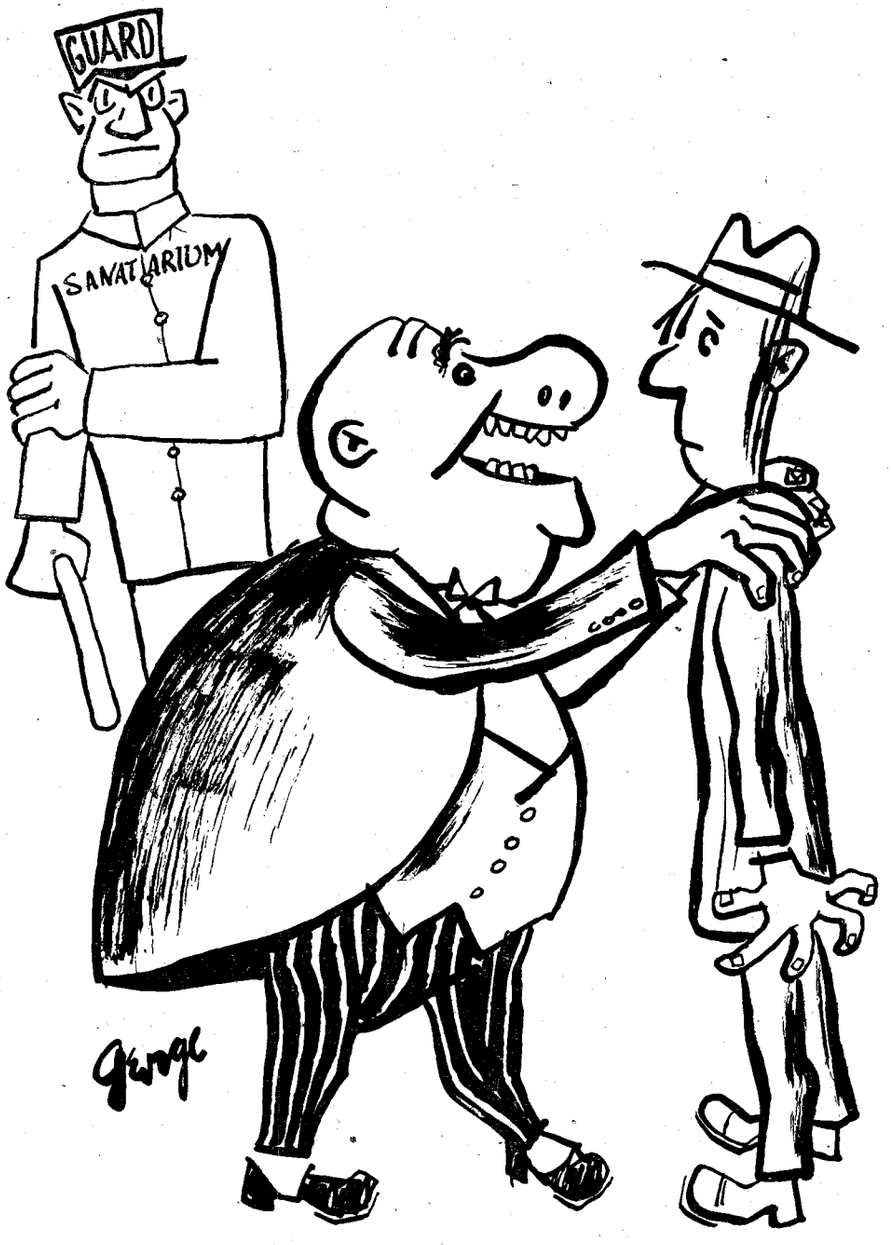
Now high on the hillside stand the fresh board barracks of the builders of New Lidice.

TAKING the southwest road from Prague, we soon found the rolling plain rising into knolls, and then low mountain foothills carpeted with green. Mountains loomed blue in the distance. We were entering the Sudeten region.

It was not only the terrain that changed. The appearance of the fields and villages, too, changed as we traveled. The fields around Prague were green with even, sturdy sprouts, and the villages built up with neat brick homes. Everything pointed to a settled and prosperous peasant life. But in the Sudeten we seemed to have descended several rungs down the ladder of civilization. Here and there we saw deserted, unplowed fields. Many houses in the villages were wooden; the grounds were dirty and neglected.

Karlovy Vory and Marianske Lazne —the former Karlsbad and Marienbad —are in beautiful mountain country. There was a time when these famous watering places attracted visitors from all parts of Europe and America. After the First World War, however, the flood of visitors grew less, being confined chiefly to wealthy Germans. During this period all the hotels, all the restaurants, all the big stores, all the tiny souvenir shops—which also sold beautiful glass and crystal wares —were German-owned. During the Second World War both resorts fell into neglect.

The Germans are gone. But there are still few visitors: only 3,600 in



"You're hired! Twenty thousand a year! You can join the union and marry my daughter!"

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1946, as compared with some 60,000 in 1938. A few scattered patients stroll through the famous colonnade at Marianske Lazne, sipping the healing waters from spouted cups.

A new life is soon to begin in these beautiful spots. The mineral springs are to be transformed into modern health resorts, and a large proportion of the hotels are to be reorganized as sanatoria. Work is already under way. Hotels, restaurants, boarding houses, shops and stores now belong to the nation, having been confiscated as German property. It is planned to turn over the smaller shops and enterprises to private operators, retaining only the large hotels and stores as government property.

But our interest in the Sudeten region lies less in the watering places than in the region as a whole, as the former bulwark of Germanic trends in Czechoslovakia. Almost all the Sudeten Germans have been deported, and hundreds of thousands of new settlers have come in from different parts of Czechoslovakia. Czechs and Slovaks have come here from other countries as well: from Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union and even from America. The tide of settlers was bound to carry along a certain amount of flotsam and jetsam; but these will inevitably filter away, in course of time, to the great good of the community. As a general rule the settlers are making a success of their lives in the new region. The sowing plan has been fulfilled, and the plants and mines are in operation; but the full development of this rich territory lies still in the future.

BATA has long been more than merely a family name. Indeed, the family is the least of the things it implies. Bata is the name of plants and factories. It is a phenomenon. It is a conception and a symbol. Bata is everywhere in Czechoslovakia. It centers in the town of Zlin; but we found it in Prague as well. We rode to the flying field in a Bata bus and got onto a Bata plane, which an hour later landed us at the Bata field. We lunched, of course, at a Bata restaurant, and stopped for the night at a Bata hotel —the biggest hotel in Czechoslovakia. We visited the Bata theater, and saw several films put out by the Bata studio.

Bata is the world's greatest footwear firm. But Bata also turns out automobiles and tires. Bata produces stockings. Bata makes lathes and many another item sold on the home or foreign market.

The people of Czechoslovakia have confiscated and nationalized Bata, name and all. As to the man who is also known as Bata—the people can get along very well without him. The only recognition they have accorded Jan Bata's existence is a fifteen-year prison sentence for treason to his country. But he is not serving that sentence. Foreseeing the manner in which his career must culminate, he decamped in good time to the United States. That country deported him, however, as a German agent, and he now lives in Brazil.

All this we were told by the new management of Bata, as we stood looking out over Zlin from the top of the seventeen-story Bata administration building — Czechoslovakia's tallest.

Our lofty eyrie afforded us an excellent view of Zlin, and at the same time of certain aspects of wartime history: a repetition of what we had found at the Skoda Works in Pilsen. No British or American planes appeared over Zlin all through the war, though all the Bata plants were working for the German army, and their destruction would have been a hard blow to the Hitlerites.

In late November, 1944, the outcome of the war was clear. There was no longer any need for the destruction

Grotesque is the Word

From the New York Herald-Tribune, August 18.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 17: In a statement bitterly criticizing abuses of Hungary's election laws . . . the State Department announced that Selden Chapin, American Minister in Budapest, had been instructed to go directly to Premier Lajos Dinnyes and urge him to "take all necessary steps" to correct the abuses.

The State Department said Communist-controlled electoral boards in Hungary were decreeing "wholesale disfranchisement" of voters on "flimsy and illegal pretexts. . . . The charges on which potential voters have lost their suffrage rights border on the grotesque."

(On August 20 Dinnyes announced that 5,293,987 had qualified for the August 31 elections. This is 129,000 more than the 1945 registration; many more were expected to register in the last ten days.)

From the Pittsburgh Courier, August 16.

JACKSON, MISS.: No cases of violence were reported in the quietest election in the history of Mississippi, but the number of Negroes going to the polls was disappointing. Some were reported challenged under Mississippi's new law allowing voters to be questioned on their adherence to "party principles."

Under the new laws, persons desiring to vote in Democratic primaries may be required to swear they subscribe to such party principles as opposition to federal anti-lynch and anti-poll tax laws.

Incomplete returns from Jackson, where the colored vote is usually heaviest, showed that only 150 had voted close to poll-closing time. In Natchez only three Negroes offered to vote and all three were disqualified. In Washington County, according to reports, fifteen Negroes were challenged at the polls and only five permitted to vote. T. B. Wilson, colored realtor of Jackson and president of the Voters' League, said . . . "A good many were not allowed to vote because they were told their names were not on the books when actually they were properly registered and had poll tax receipts."

Interviewed last week, Attorney General Tom Clark said he had no information about the new election qualifications. . . .

(Mississippi has the largest Negro population of any state. The 1,074,578 Negroes reported in the last census comprise nearly half the population.)

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of the Bata plants; it was not called for by military strategy. Any bombing that had still to be done should have been directed at armaments plants. Yet, on a late November day that will not soon be forgotten by the Bata workers, the largest of the footwear shops—a number of ten-story buildings—were thoroughly bombed and destroyed.

Several of these shops have already been rebuilt, and the rest will follow; but pre-war output has not yet been attained. The plan for 1947 calls for the production of 29,000,000 pairs of shoes, and the plan for 1948 for 33,000,000, as compared with 38,500,000 in 1937.

This visit to Bata culminated our tour, in which we sought first-hand impressions of the work of nationalized industry in Czechoslovakia and of the progress of the two-year plan. All we saw confirmed the impression already received from official documents, from books and newspaper articles, and from conversations with the heads of the national economy. We saw nationalization in practice, the historic processes unfolding in the thick of the people—eloquent testimony of the birth of a new, democratic Czechoslovakia.

THE three popular demonstrations we saw in Prague, in rapid succession, afforded an impressive review of the externals of the political struggle in Czechoslovakia.

The June 5 mass meeting was called by the Communist Party, and addressed by Prime Minister Klement Gottwald. June 5 was an ordinary working day. As evening fell, marching columns headed for the center of Prague from every side. The square in front of the speakers' stand became a seething human sea. All Prague seemed to be there. The demonstration was joined by old and young, predominantly workers. It made an impression of great and determined strength.

A few days later, the People's Socialists organized a mass meeting and demonstration to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of their party. The jubilee meeting was called for a Sunday and widely advertised for several days in advance. The party's banner — red and white — was displayed from a number of buildings as early as Saturday, and on Saturday evening red-and-white boutonnieres appeared on the lapels of many young people in the streets of Prague.

On Sunday morning Prague's central thoroughfare, the Vaclavske Namesti, was turned over to the People's Socialists for their demonstration, all traffic being detoured into other parts of the city. A speakers' stand was set up on the square. The sidewalks were packed with people, most of them wearing the party's emblems and badges. Elderly people predominated in the crowd; but there was no lack of young people, among them many students and school children. The number of this party's supporters should not be underestimated. They are many.

That day we drove into the country. We passed many villages and little towns. The jubilee was a national one, to be celebrated by People's Socialists throughout the country. But where were the red-and-white banners, the posters and emblems? Nowhere to be seen. The festivities were bounded by the outskirts of Prague. We were told that the early morning suburban trains had gone to the capital packed to capacity with people bound for the demonstration. Without this source of supply, perhaps, the demonstration in Prague might not have seemed quite so imposing.

A few days later still we witnessed a third demonstration in Prague, called by the Czechoslovak trade unions in honor of the World Federation of Trade Unions, whose General Council was in session in Prague at the time.

This was an inspiring sight. For six hours the people stood beneath the hot summer sun while the workers of hundreds of plants and factories marched past the stand on which the representatives of the world's trade unions had assembled. We could not tear our eyes away from the succession of workers' organizations, with their bright banners and placards, their lively songs and wit.

And the most wonderful thing about this festival of labor was the splendid mood of the people, their enthusiasm in greeting the leaders of the working class. We could sense a tremendous charge of energy in these endless columns. All that we had seen at the individual plants we visited merged here into the mighty and creative force of a people that had won its liberty. All who observed this demonstration came away in the confident belief that such a people is capable of overcoming all obstacles, of defeating all political intrigues.

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review and comment

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

ALBERT SEARS, *by Millen Brand. Simon & Schuster.* $2.75.

IN HIS third novel Millen Brand sets himself an exciting problem. He attempts to solve a triangle whose corners are held by an aging, fiercely independent businessman, by his ailing and estranged wife, and by his illegitimate young son.

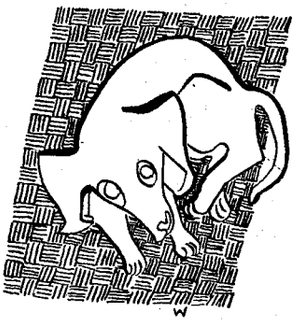
Albert Sears, the owner of a carpenter shop, has tried for years to get a divorce from his estranged wife in order to marry the mother of young Al. Under the laws of New Jersey in which they reside Sears is not recognized as the boy's father and he cannot adopt his son because the mother fears to give him up to the man she loves but who is not her legal husband. The key to the situation is held by the wife. Her refusal to grant the divorce creates the chief conflict in this novel and explains the relations between the other major characters, particularly the antagonism between father and son: the one insisting that young Al whip himself into a true image of the fighter by bucking all obstacles; the child resenting his father, hobbled by his being so "different" and by the demands put to him so harshly and with so little understanding.

To help him resolve these conflicts the author introduces the Manhursts, a Negro family which moves into a neighboring house. A "committee" attempts to force them out by wiles and violence. The Sears are drawn into the battle. Young Al is most deeply involved and is forced to learn to take care of himself, to his father's joy, in a two-fisted American way.

The structure of the novel, the shape of the chief characters and the direction they take indicate that the author's main interest was the relations between Albert and his son. But the novel twists out of his hands like a divining rod, the waters that pull him being the Manhursts and their fight. This is what has led sympathetic reviewers to discuss it as a novel with the broad themes of anti-Negro discrimination instead of a story whose real subject is fathers and sons.

The fact is that the most exciting episodes in the story do deal with the struggle of the courageous Negro family to remain in the white neighborhood. The battle between the gang of Negro boys and the white boys is very exciting; so is the scene where hoodlums ring the Manhurst man and his friends as they stand around a tree and attack them brutally. Not only do these Manhurst episodes gallop away with the book, but the Negroes come alive in a way the white characters do not. And so what should have been artistically a sort of auxiliary, feeding and illuminating the main drive, creates a short and reverses the motion to leave everything up in the air.

Millen Brand fails to solve his triangle because he does not seem to sit before his characters long enough to take possession of them imaginatively. Before the character can sit for the novelist, the novelist must sit before his character. This is what was behind De Maupassant's remark that a writer must look at a thing long enough until he sees it differently. From this contemplation and study springs a sensitiveness without which no novel can be successful. Yo do not have this sensitiveness in *Albert Sears*, this being planked down before men and women until the novelist gets into their hearts and is washed in their blood. On the contrary, in the restraint and understatement and sketchiness shown here you are impressed with the belief that the whole writer has not moved into action, that there is a shrinking from a real hug of the subject and a block somewhere.



Wilson.

All the elements are here for a strong novel. The streets, the houses, the shop are real. You get a sense of the period in which the story takes place; sights and sounds are made vivid—and in that respect Brand keeps a foot in the door of our senses. Characters present interesting possibilities—Sears with his frontier grain, his dogged honesty; his sickly, saintly wife; the typical American boy, Al; Polly, the red-haired mistress, whose fires are banked; her stolid workingman brother; and the warm-hearted Czech janitor, Joe. The theme of the novel is a good frame and tent for all these people.

What makes the novel fall short is the lack of drama to fuse the various elements and put the people on their own power so that we are drawn to them as they reveal themselves. The grand device with which Brand planned to jog his people, the fight around the Negro family, touches them only superficially in spite of the author's earnest intentions. Young Al illustrates this best of all: he is most involved, but we do not get far enough into the boy and do not see him do anything of real consequence to make that change in him matter much. The characters are too much like stakes to drive home a point of view, trees on which to hang our ideas.

There are only a handful of progressive novelists writing today. Among them Millen Brand holds an honorable position, secured by his ability, integrity and sensitiveness to the needs of the people. Every book produced by such a writer is a matter of the utmost concern to us. To justify this concern and to hold off successfully all those forces which would cripple honest writing is almost a herculean job today. But our writers can go a long way in their own esteem and in the esteem of the circle of their readers by tackling this job even when they temporarily foul the halyards. For the job is to produce work which "transcends our wonted themes and into glory peeps." It is to create books which will have a morning freshness, which will

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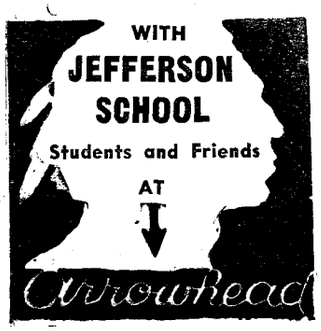

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More Maugham

CREATURES OF CIRCUMSTANCE, *by W. Somerset Maugham. Doubleday. $2.75.*

OF THE fifteen short stories in this collection at least eleven are the kind that only old friends tell to each other about people they have both known. Mr. Maugham, of course, does them up beautifully. He has the gift of gentle irony and even gentler satire and is highly readable and satisfying. He tells all (that is, all that he knows), and his refinement in the most delicate matters is almost painfully obvious.

The best of the fifteen, I think, are "The Colonel's Lady" and "The Unconquered." The former is Maugham at his cutting best; the latter, a tale of the German occupation of rural France in which a young, patriotic Frenchwoman discovers that she will bear her German attacker's child, is an unexpectedly serious piece. Of course, all the pieces are serious to those involved in them, and their author has never been one to deny significance to any aspect of human activity.

Further, Mr. Maugham has always been a serious, although not quite thorough, observer of life, and he believes that there are knowable reasons for human conduct, at least on certain levels. His story "A Man From Glasgow," an example of the common garden-variety of mystical spook-in-the-night tales, is the only obscure piece in the book. Its inclusion, however, has for me some significance. I suspect that the author of *Of Human Bondage*, *The Razor's Edge* and some twelve other novels, nineteen plays and an assortment of other works, must be reasonably aware of a gap in his knowledge and treatment of life. His characters, who with rare exceptions are drawn from the wealthy, near-wealthy and the titled, live in a world in which their political and economic ambitions stem from unrequited love or a desire for ease and security. At no time are we given a hint of the ferment and fervor with which British (and American) "statesmen" pursue their calling. The significance of imperialism is lost beneath the burden of sorrow or mediocrity with which his diplomats are saddled. With the inclusion of "A Man From Glasgow" Mr. Maugham seems to be saying, "Well, after all is said

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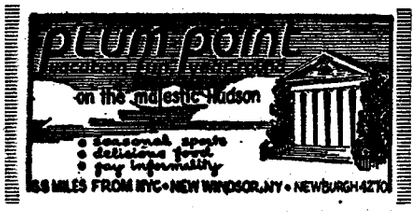
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and done there is a great deal that goes on in the world of which we know nothing, can know nothing, and perhaps will never know anything."

Mr. Maugham's people are always in flight from the reality of their lives, always running off to one of the colonies (you would never suspect from his works that the colonies exist for any other purpose), or escaping from continental Europe to Britain itself. In the story "Flotsam and Jetsam" the escape is from the uncertainty of success in Britain to the security of a colorless vassalhood in Borneo. But neither in this tale nor in "A Casual Affair" is the escape productive of happiness. On the contrary, the escapers become degraded, lost, hopeless, and finally die. Side by side with them are the "observers," into whose happiness or despair Maugham does not inquire too deeply. They are passive quantities, existing only to supply the author with stories of others.

A pattern emerges from these tales. Since Maugham deals with human relationships only, that is, with relationships divorced from considerations other than love-attachments, we must assume that these relationships are, for him, the significant indices of our life and times. And within the framework of these relationships he indicates that those who act, who move, who are driven by great passions, meet death or near-death for all their pains. Those who stand aside, the passive observers, hold to life. It is not accidental that the simplest love story, "Episode," and the sentimental tale "The Happy Couple" both end on bizzarre and gruesome notes. The philosophy is apparent: action is death, to participate is to die.

For all his mastery of technique, Maugham does not touch the stuff of life; externals, forms, styles and techniques stir his partisanship in a way that the substance behind these externals cannot.

DAVID ALMAN.

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BOATS ON THE RIVER, *by Marjorie Flack. Illus. by J. H. Barnum. Viking.* $2.50. About the many boats that sail up the Hudson—in prose and colors that catch their movement.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY LETTER, *by Marjorie Flack. Illus. by J. H. Barnum. Houghton Mifflin.* 65¢. Something which can be mailed for any child's birthday—with a description of the letter's travels.

HURRAY FOR BOBO, *by Joan Savage. Illus. by Berta Schwartz. Children's Press (a Starbright book).* 25¢. In exchange for showing the kids on the block how to fly a dragon kite, Chinese Bobo gets his chance to play baseball with them.

A KITTEN'S TALE, *by Audrey Chalmers. Viking.* $1.50. An orange kitten trails the right pair of shoes—home.

LITTLE GOLDEN BOOK OF POETRY, *illus. by Corinne Malvern. Simon & Schuster.* 25¢. A pleasing collection of poems, new and old.

MARTIN AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN, *by Catherine Coblentz. Illus. by Trientja. Children's Press.* $1. An encounter between Old Abe and a cobbler's child bearing the burdens of his war-stricken family—based on a true incident.

MUSIC TIME, songs for children from two to seven, *by Evelyn H. Hunt. Illus. by Eileen Evans. Viking.* $2.50. Songs born from everyday happenings: bouncing balls, watching the tugboat, listening to the robin, heeding traffic lights—and lots more.

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THE SAGGY, BAGGY ELEPHANT, *by K. and B. Jackson. Illus. by Tenggren. Simon & Schuster.* 25¢. After teasing by the parrot, tiger and crocodile whose skins are glove-tight, the elephant comes to accept his own wrinkled fit.

SMOKY, THE BABY GOAT, *by Mary Elting. Illus. by Veronica Reed. Whitman.* 15¢. A day in the life of a little goat and all the things he imitates. Sells in 5 & 10¢ stores, where it is worthwhile examining others in the same series.

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sights and sounds

LITTLE THEATER AT ITS BEST

The "On Stage" group plays Auden and Isherwood's anti-fascist satire, "The Dog Beneath the Skin."

By ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

"ON STAGE," as this little theater group describes itself in its current program, "was organized as a link between the college theater and Broadway. Of our twenty-five members, we claim some dozen colleges, universities and professional schools, among them the Yale School of Drama, the Dramatic Workshop of the New School, Harvard, Carnegie Tech, Queens College, Columbia. This meeting of divergent backgrounds and theatrical points of view will lead, it is hoped, to healthy growth. In giving our actors a chance to be seen, and our technicians a theater in which to practice, we feel the gap between the tributary and professional theaters will be slightly lessened. Feeling we could do ourselves and our public justice only if worthy plays were presented, we found choosing a repertoire which would serve as the best showcase for all our talents to be one of our most challenging tasks. In presenting *The Dog* 'On Stage' once more demonstrates its willingness to tackle the unconventional."

The presentation of the poetic drama *The Dog Beneath the Skin,* by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, substantiates this self-description. It was in the midst of its run and on a hot humid night that I saw the performance yet I had to make my way through standees. Here was visible evidence that there is an audience for such theater enterprise. I am old enough to remember the Washington Square, the Provincetown and other players' groups of the Twenties that brought the American theater to an unsurpassed high point; something of the atmosphere of that time was on the Cherry Lane stage and in the audience.

On the stage there were qualities missing in the planed-down, professional competence of Broadway — a spontaneity and energy that is the special gift of the young and aspiring. In such a performance as that of Charles Chauvin, as the curate, there is a skill that longer stage experience can ripen but little more, with an added quality of being possessed by the role that, again, seems to be an advantage reserved to youth. A number of the other performances approached this quality.

In its program note "On Stage" takes pride in its willingness "to tackle the unconventional." Considering that this performance is the American premiere of a play now twelve years old, the pride is justified. Alfred Kreymborg, a sound judge both of poetry and drama, included *The Dog* in his anthology of poetic drama. This performance sounds the poetry in the play with ringing clarity, especially in the declamation of the personable trio that make up the chorus. The wry eloquence, the oblique and fastidious anger, the aloof irony that are the particular literary traits of the collaborators are given very attractive embodiments on the stage.

Within the conventions of the commercial theater there would seem to be no room for *The Dog*. Broadway has not, in some years, shown the imagination it would take to see the possibilities in a script so blithely oblivious of the rules. *The Dog* has no more plot development than the most primitive of morality plays. It ambles on in happy disregard of the dramatic unities. It has no concern about factual credibility, pivoting its plot, such as it is, on a realistic impossibility—a man disguised for ten years as a dog. It has that supposed dramatic liability, a chorus occupied with that other supposed dramatic liability, the recitation of poetry.

Further, there is no attempt at character portrayal in the ordinary sense. The people are symbols, but symbols most of which contain enormous amounts of life; fresh and individual symbols which actually have the effect that conventionality has drained out of the standard symbols—the effect of personified truths. Thus, although no figure in the play is real as a character, most of them are intensely real as concentrates of observed life.

Auden and Isherwood wrote *The Dog* primarily as a satire against fascism and coincidentally as a satire against the bourgeois values that in fascism reached their bottom level. Burlesquing the hoary literary "quest" motif they sent their hero, Alan Norman, on a European tour that enabled them to mark various stages of the fascist degeneration and link it with decadent British imperialism. The quest is a search for Francis Crewe, a missing heir who, symbolically, stands for all the disinherited whose estate, Civilization, is being usurped by Money, Church and the Army. In an extension of the symbol Francis Crewe turns out to be the dog who has attached himself to Norman and accompanied him on the quest—that is, man the potential master of the earth degraded to beast by the bourgeois suppressions of his manhood.

Among the European countries visited are Westland, or Germany, the setting for which is a madhouse; and one of the typical little client kingdoms of the British Empire whose anxious monarch trembles before the British tourists as informal agents of Downing Street. On most of the quest Norman is accompanied by two newspaper correspondents, in whom conscience has completely atrophied and for whom everything is news except news that reveals the class struggle. Two way-stations on Norman's return from the quest symbolize the two extremes of bourgeois decadence: one is Paradise Park, where Ivory Towers rear up above a playground of infantile bourgeois romance; the other is Hotel Nineveh, where the bourgeois Britons demonstrate with gusto that they can be as degenerate, though always fashionably, as Continentals, and where, symbolic of the bourgeois destruction

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of art values, an orgy is climaxed by the slashing of a Rembrandt.

The return is to the village from which the quest began. There a group clearly satirizing "The Link," the infamous Tory group that sought to tie in British reaction with its cruder counterpart in Germany, is holding a typical "patriotic" fete. Money, in the person of an heiress, hands out little flags for British storm-troopers to wave; they drill to commands of General Hotham, continuing to do his "duty" in retirement, in this noble work; and they listen to the word of the Church, in the person of the Curate, whose anti-Red diatribe is one of the most remarkable satirical speeches I have heard on the stage.

The play is so rich in its symbols and so free-ranging in its satire that all I have given is far from a full sense of the authors' comprehensive indictment of the bourgeois mess. Nor have I yet mentioned the unsuccessful symbols. For remarkable as the play is, it has flaws. Sometimes the lines limp, the symbols miss, the satire sinks to the banal. More seriously there is the flaw in the conception from which, at least in part, probably came later developments in the two writers. The flaw is the incapacity to see anything clear or effective on the working-class side of the struggle—on which side, according to the authors, men of good will ought to align themselves. Here the symbols fail and become unclear or untrue. When the bereaved mother whose sons have been taken from her for the wars finally springs into action it is to stab to death the new-found heir of civilization just as he takes his stand on the anti-fascist side. And who are on the anti-fascist side other than doomed *declasse* idealists like Francis Crewe? We are not told. The authors don't know, or have no confidence in those they find. The only representatives of the working class in the play are the demented mother, the clods in the Storm Troop, and the working class as a whole, symbolized as the merely rancorous Left Foot in the Left Foot-Right Foot scene (omitted in the present production).

The doom of Francis Crewe has a special symbolic significance for the later course of the authors. If the sensitive man must die at the hands of those whom he seeks to serve, the practical course for the sensitive man is to get away before the dagger can strike him down; to abandon so fatal a cause. But history has proved their fears excessive and absurd. For those who have followed the authors' work there are melancholy, unintended ironies in the play in which the authors indicted their own present selves. For example, how do the lines sound to them, as Buddhist acolytes, that so pertly rail at the traps of religion? Or the narcissistic lines of the poet, astride his ladder, in Paradise Park?

But *The Dog* is not the the first instance of a work alienated from its authors. One thinks of Gogol, miserable over his *Dead Souls*. It does not lower a work that its authors become unworthy of it.

FILMS

LIKE the Negro, the Italian character in American films is the victim of the most complacent and vulgar stereotyping. He must always appear with eyes distended like a frog's and an accent so thick one wonders how he can speak his own language. He is ready to commit murder over a difference of opinion on the distance between Naples and Caserta. He is a comic-opera child in the hands of any kindly member of the Anglo-Saxon race.

This insultingly benevolent version has already been given the lie by two films of the Resistance, *Open City* and *Before Him All Rome Trembled*. It is dealt a further blow by *Shoe-Shine* (at the Avenue Playhouse), a film which invites comparison with the great Soviet movie *Road to Life*.

After the liberation of Rome the shoe-shine boys became the unofficial go-betweens for the Allied troops and the Italian population. They had a part in all the amenities and transactions. Cajoling and bartering, they arranged for an army blanket to become a fancy lady's coat and a can of C rations a Roman feast. Until the big operators stepped in, they got their percentage of the fantastic profits which American soldiers stationed in the larger towns made on the sales of their cigarettes. Yet, because there was no food and little else to be had in the cities, the kids could not buy the most ordinary necessities for their families and themselves. They still ran around clothed in the rags of four armies. Not being able to spend their money on things they needed, they would sometimes decide to play "gentlemen," sitting in a swanky cafe drinking ersatz coffee, or even riding horses on the bridle

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paths which had always been the domain of their betters.

Shoe-Shine is the story of two kids who bought such a horse and of what happened to them for being involuntary participants in a hijacking operation. Its chief scenes take place in the court and the reformatory to which they are condemned after a trial of which the Queen in *Alice in Wonderland* might have approved.

The reformatory with its tiers of cells is like Dante's hell, except that the children on each level are equally tormented by their cruel and stupid captors. We see how they fight back, how they are deceived to betray one another, how they resist the attempts to debase them, and how they are willing to risk death for their freedom. All these elements of the plot are treated with a wonderful absence of cant and moralizing; and there is no attempt made, as in American films of similar subjects, to have what ought to be pass for what is. No ministering angel enters at the intolerable moment to put everything to rights with justice or kindness. Only the white horse appears in the hour of tragedy to say: now you cannot have the life of which you were dreaming when you bought me.

So there is a contrast as well as a similarity with *Road to Life*. Yet this is not to the discredit of the Italian film makers, who can only record the realities before them and tell those in power, "You have done this!" Who would say that they do not dream of the day when they will be able honestly to make a *Road to Life*?

Shoe-Shine is not a heroic film, but it depicts courage cut off before it has a chance to flower; it is a story of city slum and prison, and yet it has elements of pastoral poignancy; it is peopled with children, but they have the adult sophistication of those who more than suspect who is to blame for their suffering. Its irony applies less to its subject than to those spectators who think to sit in judgment on the misery it pictures. It warns us not to be taken in by the appearance of humor in what human beings do when they are desperate. And throughout its recital of woe there runs a theme of almost mysterious gaiety: the child's fantasy of a world unfettered by hunger and what passes for law-and-order in our society. It is a film that could only have been made by those who thirst to tell the truth.

CHARLES HUMBOLDT.

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